

THE REPRESENTATION OF THE UNCONDITIONED IN THE CRITIQUE OF PURE REASON

A REPRESENTAÇÃO DO INCONDICIONADO NA CRÍTICA DA RAZÃO PURA

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ABSTRACT:

The representation of the unconditioned is a relevant theme for understanding Kant's philosophical project. According to Nibert Hinske (1989), this representation's analysis was crucial for a paradigm shift within Kantian philosophy. Hinske (1989) also insists that the problem of the representation of the unconditioned consists in a common root of the disputes inherited from tradition that transcendental philosophy must face. In this paper, I intend to clarify Kant's theses on the representation of the unconditioned found in the *Transcendental Dialectic* through a study on his understanding of the syllogistic activity of speculative reason and how he explains, through this very activity, the origin of the metaphysical objects that philosophical tradition had previously handled. Kant was able to defend these theses because he introduced in his hall of logical elements a kind of principle that does not occur in any of his works prior to the *KrV*, namely the logical maxim that requires the determination of the unconditioned for every syllogistic series operated by reason. This theoretical device found in the *Transcendental Dialectic* allowed Kant to solve the problem of the harmony between the cognitive powers and argue for a legitimate positive use of the representation of the unconditioned.

KEYWORDS: Kant, unconditioned, transcendental dialectic, transcendental illusion, transcendental ideas.

RESUMO:

A representação do incondicionado é um tema relevante para a compreensão do projeto filosófico kantiano. Nibert Hinske (1989) afirma que a análise dessa representação foi fundamental para uma mudança de paradigma na filosofia kantiana. Ainda para Hinske (1989), o problema da representação do incondicionado configuraria uma raiz comum de litígios herdados da tradição a serem enfrentados pela filosofia transcendental. Com esse artigo, pretende-se esclarecer as teses encontradas na *Dialética Transcendental* acerca da representação do incondicionado a partir de um estudo sobre a compreensão kantiana da atividade silogística da razão especulativa e de como Kant, a partir dessa atividade, explica a origem dos objetos metafísicos trabalhados pela tradição filosófica. Kant foi capaz de defender essas teses porque introduziu no rol dos elementos lógicos uma espécie de princípio que não é encontrado em nenhuma outra obra kantiana anterior à *KrV*, a saber, uma *máxima lógica* que exige a determinação do incondicionado para toda série silogística operada pela razão. Esse artifício teórico, encontrado na *Dialética Transcendental*, permitiu que Kant solucionasse o problema da harmonia entre as capacidades cognitivas e defendesse um uso legítimo positivo da representação do incondicionado.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Kant, incondicionado, dialética transcendental, ilusão transcendental, ideias transcendentais.

1. Introduction

The investigation of the importance of the issue of representation of the unconditioned in the *Critique of Pure Reason*¹ is a task that was not sufficiently developed by Kant scholars. In general, the study of the unconditioned (*das Unbedingte*) was overshadowed by an accusation, found within the reception of the *KrV*, that has been gaining more and more momentum. This accusation consisted in an attempt to show that Kant did not know how to present the concept of thing in itself in the *KrV* in a satisfactory or non-contradictory way.² That yielded a tendency of seeing the thing in itself as the center of the debate on transcendent concepts within Kant's theoretical philosophy. This controversy concerning things in themselves was not only prevalent among the first generation of readers of the *KrV* but is still of much interest to contemporary readings.

Following this trend, scholars interested in the *KrV* came up with two different views on the subject, one decrying the ontological status of the thing in itself (unconditioned) and the other assuming that it is nothing but a representation with a certain methodological function. Although I am more inclined toward the latter reading, it would be fruitful for a more systematic outline of the *KrV*—and this is what is intended here—if the binomial appearance-thing in itself were treated as a corollary of the results of an investigation concerning the binomial conditioned/unconditioned. To assess the unconditioned by means of the concept of thing in itself only hinders and—sometimes—even disrupts a systematic understanding of Kant's theoretical philosophy. Consequently, the question of how it is possible to legitimately represent objects that are independent of the conditions imposed by sensibility,

¹Henceforth *KrV*. References to the *KrV* are made through the pages of the first (A) and second (B) editions. References to Kant's works other than the *KrV* are made in accordance with the format of the *Akademie* edition, i.e., the abbreviation AA followed by volume and page number. The abbreviations of each of such works cited in this paper, according to this citation format, are the following: *Critique of Practical Reason* (*KpV*), *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (*KU*), *Jäsche Logic* (*Log*), *What Real Progress Has Metaphysics Made in Germany Since the Time of Leibniz and Wolff?* (*HN*), *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science* (*MAN*), the *Inaugural Dissertation* (*MSI*), and the *letter to Marcus Herz* (*Br10*).

² This tradition seems to have begun with Jacobi, cf. (Jacobi, 1992, pp. 85-113) and followed by Schulze, (cf. Schulze, 1992, pp. 247-271). One can safely state that these theses were reinforced by Reinhold's attempt at a defense of Kantianism, who, in resuming this doctrine, beginning at the issue of the power of representation as a unifying principle, reassesses the debate concerning the concept of thing in itself through the lens of the reflection of the external and internal conditions of representations. His reparatory philosophy—although rejecting the term thing in itself (*Ding an sich*) for not being representable—assumes a concept of matter in itself (*Stoff an sich*), which is supposed to be given to the receptivity of the power of representation (cf. Reinhold, 2016). This concept of matter as something unable to be produced by the capacity of representation could hardly be said to be reconciled with the principles of the *Transcendental Aesthetic* and *Analytic*. As an example of a reading that is contrary to the critical strand initiated by Jacobi and Schulze, one can mention the one proposed by Gerold Prauss (cf. Allison, 2004, pp. 50-75) that was later somewhat followed by Allison, whose study—due to its stature—is also worth mentioning. Following a similar approach to Allison's (cf. Allison, 2004), M. Grier (cf. Grier, 2001), in his noteworthy study of the concept of transcendental illusion, also stands out—in his own way—against this tradition initiated by Jacobi. Finally, I should also add Willaschek's recently published work, which elaborates a very mature interpretation of the *Transcendental Dialectic* (cf. Willaschek, 2018).

i.e., without contradicting the results of the *Transcendental Aesthetic* and *Analytic*, should be the outcome of a detailed study on the concept of the unconditioned.

The proper place for an investigation into the advancement of cognitive activity beyond the boundaries of possible experience is the *Transcendental Dialectic*. In this section of the *KrV*, the representation of the unconditioned is handled in a straightforward and exhaustive way. Thus, this paper does not intend to engage with the readings that emphasize the concept of thing in itself, for, according to the view I intend to defend here, to linger on a distinction that is idiomatic to the *Aesthetic* and *Analytic* with the intent of clarifying these issues about the origin of transcendent concepts only replicates old problems that will always remain aporetic and serve as material for endless disputes.³

A thesis that not only guides but also complements the one presented here is defended by Norbert Hinske (1989). He understands the inquiry into the unconditioned as the search for a common root for the disputes that were inherited from the history of philosophy and that will lead to the problem of the antinomy of pure reason. Hinske goes so far as to say that this inquiry into the unconditioned represents a major shift in the development of Kant's philosophy (Hinske, 1989, pp. 265-281). In addition to Hinske, Ludger Honnefelder (1989) also advocates an interesting thesis aligned with the one I am defending here. He claims that the question of the unconditioned replaces the question of the *absolute* inherited from tradition (Honnefelder, 1989, pp. 263-264). According to him, Kant would have inherited a set of philosophical problems that revolved around the representation of the *absolute*. This representation will later be redeemed by German Idealism. Moreover, the term unconditioned (*das Unbedingte*) was—until the late 18th century—the translation to German of the Latin term "*absolutus*."⁴

In fact, there seems to be an underlying problem that accompanied Kant for years until the publication of the first edition of the *KrV* in 1781. This problem seems to be that of uniting the conditioned with the unconditioned, without falling into the old oppositions inherited from philosophical tradition. It was only in the *first Critique*, more exactly in the *Transcendental Dialectic*, that his solution was developed due to the precise establishment of the activity of speculative reason of making inferences

³ The well-known "problem of affection"—among others—is an issue that an investigation on the unconditioned might shed light on.

⁴ Cf. Hinske (1989, p. 274). Kant abandoned the use of the term *absolute* because it was immersed in a number of theoretical inaccuracies that could muddle the understanding of his critical solution. It would not be absurd to state—as we shall see—that for Kant a philosophy of the unconditioned would be ultimately a philosophy of the absolute, even if only formally. According to Kant, "The term absolute is one of the few words that in its original meaning was suited to one concept that by and large no other word in the same language precisely suits, and so its loss, or what is the same thing, its vacillating use, must carry with it the loss of the concept itself, but this is indeed a concept with which we cannot dispense except at great disadvantage to all transcendental estimations" (*KrV*, B380-381).

based on premises with different semantic sources, namely sensible and super-sensible. However, this crossover between domains would result in the well-known transcendental illusions.

I intend to present, in the second section of this paper, how the disputes inherited from the pre-critical period were only consistently formulated once the problem of the representation of the unconditioned was introduced in the *KrV*. I will then show in the following section how Kant handled the representation of the unconditioned in two distinct contexts in the same work. As we will see later, I believe the *Transcendental Dialectic* is the adequate place to carry out an investigation on the subject. In the fourth section, I will examine the claim that Kant justifies his solution to the problem of representation of the unconditioned through a logical device found in the formulation of a *logical maxim* used in conducting syllogistic reasoning series. Finally, I will present the legitimate and illegitimate uses of the representation of the unconditioned regarding the determination of the power of cognition conceived by Kant. Furthermore, I intend to show why Kant advocates the thesis that the illegitimate representation of the unconditioned is a source of errors committed by pre-critical metaphysics.

2. The use of the concept of unconditioned in Kant's pre-critical period

If we take the whole of Kant's pre-critical writings as issued in the *Akademie* edition, he makes almost no use of the term "unconditioned" (*das Unbedingte*). It is normally used as a predicate and mostly when Kant touches on matters concerning practical philosophy. The first occurrence of Kant's use of the term not as an adjective but as a noun is dated between 1775 to 1777. These early occurrences are found only in manuscripts left as loose sheets, hence the name *lose Blätter*. What is common in all these references found in the *lose Blätter*, from the period of 1775-77 up to the first edition of the Critique of Pure Reason in 1781, is the need to find a representation that expresses a *logical locus*—free of sensible conditions, but that would still maintain a connection to the understanding—for the terms *noumenon* and *idea*. Although the term unconditioned first appears in the *Dialectic* within the framework of a logical use of reason, it is not mentioned in any of Kant's transcribed lectures on logic. Its logical use is found only in the *first Critique*, due to a theoretical need to express the role of reason in uniting the rules of the understanding in syllogistic reasoning chains toward an ultimate principle. In the passages below from Kant's *lose Blätter*, we can see the first instances of his use of the term as a noun; these were, as much as possible, ordered chronologically, yet we cannot know the precise dates of the handwritten notes.

Infinite progress cannot be comprehended and the unconditioned cannot be made intuitive.⁵

In nature, however, i.e., in space and time, nothing unconditioned can be encountered, and yet reason demands that as the totality of conditions, since it will constitute the object itself. [...] The unconditioned contains the intellectual (intelligible) (*noumenon*) in three ways, and one can have cognition of freedom and its laws and thereby prove the objective reality of humanity as *noumenon* in the midst of its mechanism as *phaenomenon*. – God as unconditionally necessary substance. Freedom as unconditioned causality and immortality as personality (spirit) independent from *commercio* with the body (as condition).⁶

The idea of the unconditioned for all conditions of appearance is grounded in reason as a precept to seek the completeness of all cognition of the understanding in subordination.⁷

The unconditioned of inherence (or of the aggregate). 2. That of [*crossed out*: consequence] dependence or of the series. 3. That of the concurrence of all possibility in one and of one for all. [...] The absolute is the same as the unconditioned, the latter as that which is complete, which is thought negatively without a restricting condition.⁸

A plausible thesis would be that Kant was after a common title for the concepts of reason that also fitted the logical, transcendental, and transcendent uses. That would explain why he did not use the terms thing in itself and noumenon. The latter do not fit in any possible logical use because they imply a somewhat ontological status.⁹ Nothing would be more appropriate than the term that supported the unity of reason being expressed first in a logical maxim and then investigated as a synthetic principle. According to Kant, this is so because, strictly speaking, speculative reason only has a logical use, that is to say, it cannot extend the knowledge of an object, but only organize this knowledge through the systematization of the use of the understanding.

⁵ „Der Unendliche Fortgang kann nicht begriffen und das Unbedingte nicht Anschauend gemacht werden.“ Kant: **AA XVII, Reflexionen zur Metaphysik**. Seite 709. Lose Blätter. Etwa 1775 - 1777. <Available at: <http://korpora.zim.uni-due.de/kant/aa17/>>

⁶ „In der Natur aber, d.i. in Raum und Zeit, kann nichts Unbedingtes Angetroffen werden, und doch verlangt die Vernunft dasselbe als die Totalität der Bedingungen, weil sie das object selbst machen will. [...] Dreyerley intellectuelles (g intelligibeles) (*noumenon*) enthält das Unbedingte, und von der Freyheit und ihren Gesetzen kann man Erkenntnis haben und dadurch die objective Realität der Menschheit als *noumenon* mitten im mechanism desselben als *phaenomenon* beweisen. — Gott als unbedingt nothwendige Substantz. Freyheit als unbedingte caussalitaet und Unsterblichkeit als vom *commercio* mit dem Körper (als Bedingung) unabhängige personalitaet (Geist).“ *Id.* AA XVIII, Metaphysik Zweiter Theil, Seite 221. Lose Blätter. Etwa 1780 – 1783 (?). <Available at: <http://korpora.zim.uni-due.de/kant/aa17/>>

⁷ „Die Idee des Unbedingten zu allen Bedingungen der Erscheinung ist in der Vernunft gegründet als eine Vorschrift, die Vollständigkeit aller Verstandeserkenntnis in der subordination zu suchen.“ *Ibid.*, Seite 226. Lose Blätter. Etwa 1780 – 1783 (?). <Available at: <http://korpora.zim.uni-due.de/kant/aa17/>>

⁸ „Das Unbedingte der Inhärenz (g oder aggregats). 2. Das der consequentz Dependenz oder der Reihe. 3. Das der concurrentz aller Möglichkeiten zu einem und eines zu allen. [...] Das absolute ist so viel als das Unbedingte, dieses als das vollendete, welches negativ ohne restringirende Bedingung gedacht wird.“ *Ibid.*, Seite 228. Lose Blätter. Etwa 1780 – 1783 (?). <Available at: <http://korpora.zim.uni-due.de/kant/aa17/>>

⁹ Just as Kant dispensed with the concept of the *absolute*.

In his *Inaugural Dissertation*, Kant had already presented the distinction between the principles of the sensible and intelligible worlds (*MSI*, AA 02:385-419). However, in a letter to Marcus Herz, referring back to his *Dissertation*, he calls attention to his own silence regarding a possible positive treatment that should be given to the nature of the intellectual representations. He also questions whether these representations could not be an internal product of the subject's own activity, since they are not formed by the way in which we are affected (*Br*, AA 10:131-132). On the one hand, this was only solved with the formal representation of cognition. On the other, this representation was clarified only with an investigation into the objective illusory aspect of the unconditioned. The new task—not only regarding intuitive cognition, but also and especially its metaphysical extension—would only be achieved with the publication of the *KrV*. It is safe to say that Kant was only able to overcome a certain theoretical impasse that accompanied him for years because he distinguished the logical role of the understanding from that of reason. Thus, he discovered a guiding thread to obtain the categories from the logical forms of the judgment—found in the understanding (*KrV*, A70/B95-A83/B109)—and from the logical syllogistic forms—found in reason—to derive the representations of the unconditioned (*KrV* A298/B355-A338/B396), which will serve as the ground for principles that possess heuristic and regulative validity (*KrV*, A616/B644) in relation to theoretical systematic knowledge.

One can then clearly see in the *KrV* an architectonic plan to solve the problem of the representation of the unconditioned. Kant knew that to present the grounds of cognition by means of representative capacities presupposed a radical distinction between appearance and thing in itself within the ontological framework as two ways of referring to things in general. Consequently, he needed to find a solution for the representation of transcendent objects that seemed to be formed within our conscience independently of experience not only to solve the disputes inherited from traditional metaphysics but also to ground his critical idealism. The implicit need for a transcendent representation that would complete and ground experience was one of the greatest problems Kant faced and it entwined his theses in seemingly unsolvable problems. However, these problems only remain without solution if they are not connected to the development of the *Transcendental Doctrine of the Elements* in the *Transcendental Dialectic*, where the role played by speculative reason in the determination of cognition is discussed.

In the *preface to the second edition* of the *KrV*, Kant states that one of philosophy's greatest challenges is to succeed in a legitimate exposition of the representation of the unconditioned.

For that which necessarily drives us to go beyond the boundaries of experience and all appearances **is the unconditioned**, which reason necessarily and with every right demands in things in themselves for everything that is conditioned, thereby demanding the series of conditions as something completed. Now

if we find that on the assumption that our cognition from experience conforms to the objects as things in themselves, the unconditioned cannot be thought at all without contradiction, but that on the contrary, if we assume that our representation of things as they are given to us does not conform to these things as they are in themselves but rather that these objects as appearances conform to our way of representing, then the contradiction disappears; and consequently that the unconditioned must not be present in things insofar as we are acquainted with them (insofar as they are given to us), but rather in things insofar as we are not acquainted with them, as things in themselves: then this would show that what we initially assumed only as an experiment is well grounded. (*KrV*, Bxx, emphasis added.).

The importance of a solution to the problem of the representation of the unconditioned, which was inherited from the pre-critical period—as we have seen in this section—, is not manifest only in the *KrV*. In a sense, this problem spreads throughout Kant's entire corpus. In his manuscripts *What real progress has metaphysics made in Germany since the time of Leibniz and Wolff?*, for instance, Kant is even more emphatic about the relevance of the role played by the unconditioned as the core of the problems inherited from tradition. In these writings, he distinguishes the three stages of metaphysics, connecting them to efforts to solve the problem of the representation of the unconditioned. In the first stage of metaphysics—as ontology—the representation of the unconditioned would be stuck in a chain of progressive and infinite determination in its direction. The second great progress of metaphysics—as transcendental cosmology—would be marked by the search for the unconditioned in nature, even if reason does not have adequate reasons for its representation. This demand for the representation of the unconditioned within an empirical framework prompts reason to fall into unsolvable conflicts. One of the consequences of this metaphysics of nature would be not being able to reconcile the theoretical and practical dimensions of reason due to a deficiency in the representation of the transition from the conditioned to the unconditioned. Thus, progress in metaphysics and its critical solution depended on a twofold task: to represent the conditioned as an appearance and rid the unconditioned of the contradictions derived from its representation as thing in itself. For that reason, a transition to the super-sensible would be sanctioned (*HN*, AA 20:281-296). The third stage then would be identified by the solution of the antinomy that—as carried out in the *KrV*—articulates the representation of the unconditioned, as an intelligible condition, with the concept of synthesis of things not homogeneous in dynamical series (*KrV*, A530/B558-A531/B559). Still in the aforementioned manuscripts, Kant writes:

Now that is actually the case with metaphysics, if the critique of reason pays careful attention to all its steps, and takes account of where they ultimately lead to. For there are two hinges on which it turns: *First*, the doctrine of the ideality of space and time, which in regard to theoretical principles merely points toward the super-sensible, but for us unknowable, in that on its way to this goal, where it is concerned with the knowledge *a priori* of objects of sense, it is theoretico-dogmatic; *second*, the doctrine of the reality of the concept of freedom, as that of a knowable super-sensible, in which metaphysics is still only practico-dogmatic. *But both hinges are sunk, as it were, into the doorpost of the rational concept of the unconditioned in the totality*

of all mutually subordinated conditions, where there is need to remove that illusion which creates an antinomy of pure reason, by confusion of appearances with things-in-themselves, and which contains, in this very dialectic, an invitation to make the passage from the sensible to the super-sensible (*HN*, AA 20:311, emphasis added).

Kant's solution to the problems faced by pre-critical philosophy was to represent the unconditioned as a product of the logical activity of speculative reason, showing how this representation unfolds in other kinds of use. This solution—critical in nature—allowed Kant to explain how reason necessarily produces concepts of transcendent objects without coming into conflict with the remaining cognitive powers. This strategy enabled the solution of several aporias of pure reason and removed the unconditioned from the contradictions it was immersed in when it was represented as a non-subjective condition of appearances. Therefore, the unconditioned could be maintained as a problematic concept within a speculative framework, thus being able to be thought without contradiction. This allowed it to be represented as an intelligible cause in relation to experience, making room for the construction of a practical philosophy that is aligned with its theoretical counterpart.¹⁰ Furthermore, due to this solution of the problem of the unconditioned within a speculative framework, Kant was able to think out the non-conflicting operation of the legislations of the understanding and of reason in the same domain. Only then is Kant able to distinguish—in the *third Critique*—the two kinds of use of the power of judgment, namely determining and reflective judgments (*KU*, AA05:171-198). This operation of the reflective judgment of going from the particular to the universal is analogous to the syllogistic activity of reason guided by the unconditioned. Since this paper focuses on the *KrV*, however, this connection will not be further pursued here. These examples taken from other works only serve to illustrate to what extent Kant developed his investigation into the representation of the unconditioned since his pre-critical writings.

¹⁰ The following passages of the *KpV* show just how important the unconditioned is in relation to the project of a practical philosophy. "With this faculty *transcendental freedom* is also established, taken indeed in that absolute sense in which speculative reason needed it, in its use of the concept of causality, in order to rescue itself from the antinomy into which it unavoidably falls when it wants to think the *unconditioned* in the series of causal connection; this concept, however, it could put forward only problematically, as not impossible to think, without assuring it objective reality, and only lest the supposed impossibility of what it must at least allow to be thinkable call its being into question and plunge it into an abyss of skepticism" (*KpV*, AA05:03). In fact, Kant needs to show that the unconditioned is a metaphysical topic and that it resides in pure reason itself, that is, in the subject. Only then is he justified to state, as he intends to, that "The concept of freedom alone allows us to find the unconditioned and intelligible for the conditioned and sensible without going outside ourselves" (*KpV*, AA05:106).

3. Two contexts in which the representation of the unconditioned is approached in the *KrV*

In the *KrV*—more exactly in the *Doctrine of Elements*—, one can distinguish two contexts in which the concept of unconditioned appears. The first is found in the *Transcendental Aesthetic* and *Analytic* and the second in the *Transcendental Dialectic*. In the two first sections, Kant presents an illegitimate use of the concept of the unconditioned, based on concepts permeated with a strong ontological commitment. In the *Transcendental Analytic*, the unconditioned is indirectly presented through problems that involve the thing in itself and the noumenon, as the result of an abstraction of the limits of possible cognition. In the *Transcendental Dialectic*, on the other hand, Kant proposes to investigate the unconditioned by means of the possibility of going beyond the boundaries of experience to show that certain controversies concerning intelligible beings are grounded in a misunderstanding of the speculative use of reason. In this case, the unconditioned is looked into starting from the questions that were left unanswered in the *Aesthetic* and *Analytic*. In this context, Kant makes an exhaustive use, in the *Dialectic*, of the representation of the unconditioned.¹¹ He is aware that the relation of appearances to the thing in itself will always remain contradictory as long as the unconditioned is not represented as a product of the power of cognition itself. Thus, in the *Dialectics*, Kant presents a solution for the concepts of thing in itself and noumenon within a speculative framework, starting from the legitimate representation of the unconditioned.

In the *Analytic*, he thoroughly describes the conundrums involved in the distinction between appearance and thing in itself, but it is only in the *Dialectic* that he puts forward his critical solution to them. The *Dialectic*, on the other hand, clearly fulfills a twofold role: it solves the problem of the representation of the unconditioned, but also serves as a counterproof to the legitimate exposition of the grounds of every possible experience. A footnote from BXXI in the *KrV* is a good illustration of what is at stake here:

The *analysis* of the *metaphysician* separated pure *a priori* knowledge into two very heterogeneous elements, namely those of the things as appearances and the things in themselves. The dialectic once again combines them, in unison with the necessary rational idea of the unconditioned, and finds that the unison will never come about except through that distinction, which is therefore the true one (*KrV*, BXXI).

¹¹ The word "unconditioned" is used 144 times in the *first Critique*, 134 of which occur in the *Transcendental Dialectic*, 5 in the *preface to the second edition*, and 5 in the *Doctrine of Method*. The term is neither used in the *Transcendental Aesthetic* nor in the *Analytic*. This shows how the unconditioned is a subject that pertains almost exclusively to the *Transcendental Dialectic*.

For Kant, handling the problem involving the representation of transcendent concepts based on the binomial appearance/thing in itself is only a starting point. The endpoint of the investigation only took place with the introduction of the regulative (*KrV*, A644/B672) and hypothetical (*KrV*, A647/B675) uses of reason in the *Appendix to the Dialectic*. In the *Transcendental Analytic*, the unconditioned—being dealt with indirectly through the concepts of thing in itself and noumenon—could only be investigated in a negative sense. According to Kant: "If by a noumenon we understand a thing *insofar as it is not an object of our sensible intuition*, because we abstract from the manner of our intuition of it, then this is a noumenon in the negative sense" (*KrV*, B307). In the *Analytic*, he admits a provisional meaning for the unconditioned (thing in itself/noumenon) as that which is outside our capacity of intuition, that is, as an object given in abstraction of our only capacity to receive representations.¹² It would then still be necessary to indicate the source and the necessity of the production of transcendent concepts, namely to set up the theory of transcendental illusion. The exclusively negative treatment of the unconditioned leads Kant's theses to aporias that would make, for example, a solution to the apparent contradiction between freedom and nature impossible, thus undermining the project of a practical philosophy.

Kant introduces in the *Transcendental Dialectic* the solution to these problems involving the meaning of concepts that go beyond any possible experience. This section of the *Doctrine of Elements* in the *KrV* handles the representation of the unconditioned in a different context from the previous two. Both in the *Aesthetic* and *Analytic*, the sections where the concepts of thing in itself and noumenon are more frequently mentioned, Kant clearly investigates the relationship between sensibility and the understanding in the search for the limits of possible objective cognition. In the *Dialectic*, on the other hand, Kant analyzes the unconditioned in a context in which he wishes to showcase how it is possible to legitimately surpass these limits.

4. The representation of the unconditioned from the point of view of the Transcendental Dialectic

Unlike what happens in the *Analytic*, the *Dialectic* is trying to determine the legitimate use of the unconditioned in relation to cognition. For this task, it was essential for Kant to specify the kind of theoretical cognition operated by reason. For him, the logical activity of reason is determined by

¹² On transcendental illusion, see Grier (2001) and Willaschek (2018).

sylogistic constructions. Thus, in general, the study of the theoretical use of reason would boil down to the study of syllogistic logic. However, this was already widely explored in the subject of general logic. Consequently, the innovation of Kant's dialectic concerning the study of the theoretical use of reason is the formulation of a *logical maxim* that would function as a guiding principle of syllogistic activity. This *maxim* ultimately expresses a logical need for an absolute end to the syllogistic reasoning chains. For Kant, this need to determine a foundational principle is the hallmark of the speculative activity of reason. He defines this epistemic activity of reason as cognition by principles (*Erkenntnis aus Prinzipien*) (*KrV*, A300/B357). This kind of cognition is grounded by the *formal structure of a syllogism*. One can say that Kant reduces the logical acts of reason to syllogistic activities, in which cognition is operated only by conceptual mediation. Any cognition obtained by principles, i.e., through reason, occurs when the particular is known in the universal by concepts alone. The principle that grounds this cognition is found in the fundamental major premise at the top of the syllogistic chain. Any given particular cognition in a syllogistic structure is subordinated to the principle expressed by the major premise that functions as the ultimate ground of the formal truth of the chain.

Kant is careful enough to distinguish between this kind of cognition operated by reason from two other ways of articulating cognitions. The first is mathematical. Mathematical principles are axioms and thus must showcase their proofs not only through relations between concepts, but also submit these principles to intuition, i.e., submit them to a sensible condition, although pure. Mathematics operates its principles in such a way that the universal is known in the particular (*KrV*, A300/B356). The second way of cognizing, distinct from the one found in the proper procedures of reason, is located in the principles of the pure understanding. Similarly, these cannot abandon their sensible condition without losing their validity in the process. The understanding only produces synthetic knowledge by connecting its principles to intuitions, being unable to establish *a priori* relations only by linking concepts. Just as in the case of mathematical cognition, here the universal is also only known in the particular (*KrV*, A301-303/B357-359).

Cognition by principles can then be summarized in two main features: through it, one cognizes the particular in the universal; and, in it, cognition is carried out *a priori* by concepts alone. A particular cognition is given in the universal because the conclusion of the syllogism is nothing but the subsumption of the minor (particular) term under the major (universal) term that shows up in the universal proposition (major premise). And this cognition is purely conceptual because it only establishes relations between concepts by means of the middle term, with no concern for the source of their contents.

Although this ability of reason allows it to advance in its cognitive activity without having to worry about the limits imposed on the understanding, it also raises some suspicion, for it always lacks the determinate aspect of experience that serves as a guide in the advancement of its logical use. As long as reason acts according to rules provided by the understanding, it will be safe from the risk of losing sight of its objectivity, since, in this case, its inferences will be mediated by immanent principles of the understanding. However, there is always a risk of reason going beyond experience in its activity. This is why Kant examined this logical activity more closely and showed that it is in the continuous use thereof that transcendental illusions will inevitably be produced (*KrV*, A293-309/A349-366). His strategy is to derive the way in which reason plays its role in producing cognitions from the logical use of syllogisms. Its function would be to extend the cognition produced by the understanding, by relating only concepts, without worrying about the sensible conditions presented in the first part of the *Doctrine of Elements*.

An inquiry into the syllogistic activity seemed profitable because a syllogism would somehow carry with it the synthesis of the activities of the three higher-order cognitive faculties. The major premise would be provided by a rule of the understanding, the minor would be a case subsumed under the rule by the power of judgment, and the conclusion would be carried out by reason.¹³ Thus, Kant goes much further than just describing the general forms of this kind of cognition by principles. This simple formality would be exclusively an object of general logic. The spirit of transcendental logic, by contrast, is to show how this logical form can play a role in establishing knowledge about nature. As a result, it focuses on the dynamical character of this logical activity and devotes itself to the study of a specific model of the development of complex syllogisms, namely prosyllogisms.¹⁴

[...] reason in its logical use seeks the universal condition of its judgment (its conclusion), and the syllogism is nothing but a judgment mediated by the subsumption of its condition under a universal rule (the major premise). Now since this rule is once again exposed to this same attempt of reason, and the condition of its condition thereby has to be sought (by means of a prosyllogism) as far as we may, we see very well that

¹³For Kant, in relation to theoretical cognition, reason is represented as the faculty of cognition by principles, the understanding as the faculty of rules (*KrV*, A299/B357), and the power of judgment as "the faculty of *subsuming under rules*, i.e., of determining whether something stands under a given rule (*casus datae legis*) or not" (*KrV*, A132/B171).

¹⁴ Although reason can devise a syllogism in the direction of episyllogisms, it only expresses an arbitrary representation of the idea of the totality of consequences, not resulting in a transcendental use thereof (*KrV*, A337/B395). Only in an ascending series can reason express the unconditioned by necessity, through its syllogistic activity. Consequent syllogisms do not characterize a necessary use of the *logical maxim* (*KrV*, A330-331/B387-388). Generally speaking, in a polysyllogistic chain, when going from one syllogism to another, the ones on the side of the conditions or grounds (the syllogisms given *in antecedentia*) are called prosyllogisms and the ones on the side of the consequences are called episyllogisms. Thus, the conclusion of a syllogism (prosyllogism) becomes the premise of another syllogism (episyllogism) and—naturally—vice versa. In the *Jäsche Logic*, Kant presents the concept of polysyllogism in his exposition of the power of reflective judgment, showing that this activity cannot determine objects, it only involves the way in which reason *reflects* on them in order to achieve cognition (*Log*, AA 09:133-134).

the proper principle of reason in general (in its logical use) is to find the *unconditioned* for conditioned cognitions of the understanding, with which its unity will be completed (*KrV*, A307/B364, emphasis added).

The necessity—that Kant calls logical—of finding "the unconditioned for conditioned cognitions of the understanding, with which its unity will be completed" does not appear in any of his writings on general logic.¹⁵ After all, the universal principle of all syllogisms is given in the following logical maxim: "What stands under the condition of a rule also stands under the rule itself" (*Log*, AA 09:120, § 57). And the definition that would properly express what is a cognition by principles given in a syllogism is: "[...] the cognition of the necessity of a proposition through the subsumption of its condition under a given universal rule" (*Log*, AA 09:120, § 56). These passages taken from the realm of general logic show that to realize that we need a proposition in order to transfer formal truth value to another we do not require this activity to be carried out up to the unconditioned. This necessity of going back to the unconditioned is one of Kant's novelties in the transcendental logic. In fact, the syllogistic structure only achieves its ultimate formal truth when a major premise is represented as an ultimate principle of the entire chain. It is in establishing this need of reason to seek an ultimate principle—which Kant assumes as both logical and formal—that the representation of the unconditioned is put forward as the guiding principle of the activity of speculative reason.

Here is possibly Kant's true touchstone for establishing the grounds of speculative reason. He saw in the logical structure of inference through prosyllogisms—in which several syllogisms are linked in a chain through the relation of subordination toward their grounds—an opportunity to solve the problem of the representation of the unconditioned.¹⁶ Thus, he cleared away an obstacle from his reflections and was then able to determine the role reason played in relation to theoretical cognition without contradicting a possible transcendent use thereof¹⁷. From a speculative point of view, this logical activity of reason expresses the need to organize all the partial cognitions produced by the understanding in a

¹⁵ As previously mentioned, this is the case from the point of view of the *Lectures on logic* (Kant, 1992), which suffices for the present investigation.

¹⁶ Fischer (1866) established the unconditioned as the main criterion for distinguishing the activities of reason from those of the understanding. For him, "*It is not the form of the syllogism which makes the distinction between Understanding and Reason. It seeks to attain the highest rule—the Principle, or the Unconditioned. But this could not be the case if it proceeded merely under the guidance of experience; it can only be the case if this goal is appointed to it by Reason itself, independent of all experience. The representation of this goal, or object, must precede the search after it*" (Fischer, 1866, p.157, emphasis added). Had the unconditioned not been set as the main task of reason, Kant would have had no way of explaining the inclination toward metaphysics present in the power of cognition itself. Syllogisms would thereby be restricted to the empirical use of the understanding and there would be no way of formulating the theory of transcendental illusion.

¹⁷ Kant would then not be able to solve the conflict between the theoretical and practical uses of reason.

system, since the formal structure of a polysyllogistic chain is such that all its parts are necessarily linked and grounded in a single principle. All the rules contained in such a chain must be linked and subordinated to each other. As a result, cognitions cannot be a mere agglomeration and the method derived from reason must be systematic. But, strictly speaking, the systematic unity expressed by this maxim of reason is only admitted logically and has, therefore, no objective value in itself. Kant defends this systematic nature of reason on several occasions, as the following passage shows:

Nevertheless, the method can always be systematic. *For our reason itself (subjectively) is a system*, but in its pure use, by means of mere concepts, only a system for research in accordance with principles of unity, for which experience alone can give the matter (*KrV*, A737-738/B765-766, emphasis added).

Regarding the relation between the understanding and reason—specifically where their activities merge in syllogistic series—one can see, up to some point in the polysyllogistic derivation, that the unity that reason establishes in the use of the understanding seems to be merely analytic. In that case, there would be a harmony between the activities of the three higher cognitive faculties, since the power of judgment mediates the rule and the conclusion. Reason would then provide only a subjective law of comparison between the cognitions of the understanding, maximizing its use and unifying its rules (*KrV*, A306/B362). However, as Kant notes, a continuous use of the logical activity of reason inevitably results, at some point in the advancement in the series toward its grounds, in a leap out of the domain of possible experience, going beyond the empirical use of the understanding. New inferences now refer to the unconditioned and the understanding cannot operate on this representation. Thus, the pure use of the logical ability of reason becomes a transcendent use thereof. *A priori* cognitions involved in these inferences will refer to the unconditioned, which can only be expressed by transcendental concepts. Kant's strategy is to show that the very logical activity of reason grounds its metaphysical inclination. Due to its natural inclination to proceed prosyllogistically toward the unconditioned, the logical use of speculative reason turns into a transcendent use. In order for the cognition by principles to have objective validity, it would need to operate via the empirical use of the understanding, since the pure use of reason, through its principles, can never directly relate to appearances.

The principles arising from this supreme principle of pure reason will, however, be transcendent in respect of all appearances, i.e., no adequate empirical use can ever be made of that principle. It will therefore be entirely distinct from all principles of the understanding (whose use is completely immanent, insofar as it has only the possibility of experience as its theme) (*KrV*, A308/B365).

Kant, therefore, argues that reason is determined by a polysyllogistic process that inevitably leads it to a metaphysical status. Based on its logical use, Kant's *logical maxim* is then automatically converted into a *principle of transcendent use*. He shows that this is the case because the ultimate rule that contains the unconditioned is not really a rule anymore, whose reference belongs to the domain of the understanding, but rather a principle of pure reason, whose content surpasses sensible conditions. A cognition obtained by means of this prosyllogistic chain always presupposes *a priori* an ultimate principle that grounds each series of syllogisms. For when a cognition is determined, reason tries to infer—based on this cognition and with the assistance of the power of judgment—a new relation between concepts, thus broadening the cognition by means of the syllogistic chain.¹⁸ Reason then keeps on going indefinitely if it does not arrive at the unconditioned, always seeking—in the direction of prosyllogisms—a more universal proposition in the chain as a major premise.

One should thereby note that the *logical maxim*, which expresses the need to search for the unconditioned in a prosyllogistic chain of conditioned cognitions, is automatically converted into a *principle of speculative reason*.¹⁹ The problem Kant is handling here is that the conversion of the *logical maxim* into a principle of the power of cognition inevitably allows for the use of objective determinations found in the empirical use of the understanding as grounds to determine the unconditioned. As a result, the unconditioned is treated as if it were an object given with everything that is conditioned and submitted to the principle that contains it in the syllogistic chain. The unconditioned is then represented as an object belonging to a polysyllogistic chain that begins in the empirical use of the understanding and ends, in this case, in a transcendent use of reason. Kant thinks he has a solution to this problem, as he would have

¹⁸ Peter Schulthess (1981) saw an interesting relation between mathematical concepts and this continuous or infinite logical activity of reason in determining the unconditioned. The mathematical concept equivalent to such an infinite application of the syllogistic function is that of transcendent function. He intends to show that the mathematical origin of transcendent concepts reveals a connection between *Transcendental Analytic* and *Transcendental Dialectic*. He sees his reading as a middle ground between the interpretation that places the *Analytic* at the center of the *first Critique*, the *wissenschaftstheoretische Kantinterpretation*; and the one that takes the *Dialectic* as the most important topic in the work, the *metaphysische Kantinterpretation*. Ultimately, he wishes to show that the relation between transcendental and formal logic can be understood from the viewpoint of the distinction between intensional and extensional logic. This is an interesting hypothesis because it shows how reason requires that the syllogistic chain advance continuously and that only the formation of a transcendent concept—that would function as an ultimate limit—can make it complete this activity (Schulthess, 1981).

¹⁹ The investigation into this synthetic principle of pure reason derived from the *logical maxim* that contains the unconditioned provides a basis for a new interpretation of the principle of sufficient reason. In this sense, Kauark-Leite's (2014) thesis seems appropriate, taking into account the works of Gerd Buchdahl and Nicholas Rescher, according to which the principle of sufficient reason—or determining ground, as Kant prefers, following Crusius' considerations—cannot be reduced to the principle of causality presented in the second analogy of experience; for there are two possible approaches for what causality means: the constitutive one and the regulative one. This distinction between regulative and constitutive use derives from the two possible uses of the *logical maxim*. The *Dialectic* opens up a whole new domain of interpretations of the principle of determining ground in relation to the polysyllogistic process toward the unconditioned as a regulative principle. On this point, see also Longuenesse (2004), Buchdahl (1992), and Kant (1990) (MAN, AA04).

unveiled the problem of the representation of the unconditioned in relation to how one approaches the epistemic activity of speculative reason. His thesis is that the unconditioned expresses a transcendent content that ought to be subsumed in a concept syllogistically linked to the empirical use of the understanding.

Despite the problematic inclination of reason toward metaphysics, from the point of view of its logical syllogistic use, Kant does not propose that we abandon this activity. On the contrary, based on this critique of the use of a syllogism, Kant devised a thesis that turned out to be very fruitful for his philosophy in relation to the systematic organization of knowledge. The metaphysical task imposed on reason—indirectly—forces the understanding to follow its conceptual development and expand its knowledge of nature. By means of this syllogistic activity, the unconditioned prompts the understanding to go beyond what is immediately given, providing it with a broader and more systematic unity. This is so because the representation of the unconditioned is converted into a *focus imaginarius*, that is, into a "[...] a point from which the concepts of the understanding do not really proceed, since it lies entirely outside the bounds of possible experience—nonetheless still serves to obtain for these concepts the greatest unity alongside the greatest extension" (*KrV*, A644/B672). However, in addition to this legitimate use as a projected unity (*KrV*, A647/B675), the unconditioned, as a transcendent object, will be involved in dialectical syllogisms that presuppose a misguided use of the logical activity of reason.

Kant advocates that the metaphysical inclination of reason, derived from its logical use, has both legitimate and illegitimate uses.²⁰ Regarding the illegitimate aspects, Kant is concerned with showing that this logical use turns into a transcendental use. Inevitably, the *logical maxim*—converted into a *synthetic principle of reason*—determines the unconditioned as a thing in general or in itself. The unconditioned is then determined independently of our mode of intuition, producing dialectical syllogisms that will be sources of errors in the metaphysical tradition. It is not a coincidence that one of the main aims of the *Dialectic* is to show how transcendent concepts can have a transcendental use.

In the *Analytic*, Kant has established that the categories cannot have a transcendental use, that is, they are not allowed to relate to things in general or in themselves, as they need schemata in order to have objective validity (*KrV*, A238-239/B297-298). Categories—which also express a logical function of thought—are only empty concepts when they do not relate to objects in experience through the empirical use of the understanding. The unconditioned, on the other hand, does not have any condition that could

²⁰ "The transcendental use of a concept in any sort of principle consists in its being related to things in general and in themselves; its empirical use, however, in its being related merely to *appearances*, i.e., objects of a possible experience" (*KrV*, A238/B298).

warrant the subsumption of objects of experience under its concept. It is by following the tracks of its polysyllogistic use that reason finds the way to objectively determine the unconditioned. Inadvertently, the transcendent use of the unconditioned becomes transcendental use. Consequently, the *logical maxim*, which requires an object as a ground in the syllogistic chain, also has a transcendental use. This use is erroneous, as the unconditioned is then illusorily represented as an object synthetically linked to appearances and placed as a transcendent ground of all experience. The polysyllogistic chain becomes the unity of the totality of determinations of the hypostatized unconditioned.

Nevertheless, despite this mistaken use, these polysyllogistic chains, taken as unities provided by reason, can have, according to Kant, a legitimate use by means of the representation of a

[...] analogue of a schema of sensibility, but with this difference, that the application of concepts of the understanding to the schema of reason is not likewise a cognition of the object itself (as in the application of the categories to their sensible schemata), but only a rule or principle of the systematic unity of all use of the understanding (*KrV*, A665/B693).

The core of this confusion among the several meanings of the unconditioned is the intertwined character of the uses of the syllogistic activity of reason. Strictly speaking, the distinction between the so-called *logical maxim* and the *principle of pure reason*²¹, as different ways of conducting syllogistic chains, is only theoretical and also the result of Kant's twofold stance on the representation of the unconditioned: on the one hand, he denies that this representation admits any constitutive (*KrV*, A644/B672) and apodictic (*KrV*, A646/B674) uses; on the other, he upholds its regulative (*KrV* A644/B672) and hypothetical (*KrV*, A647/B675) uses. In general, however, there is only one syllogistic activity. For that reason, without *reflecting* on it, the links of the polysyllogistic chains are represented as being mixed together, independently of their source, the logical and real determinations of this activity then remaining undifferentiated. This immediately results in confusion among the several uses of reason. This confusion enables the representation of the unconditioned to be susceptible to several possible meanings and uses. As a result, for instance, the unconditioned can, in fact be —stealthily—linked to every syllogistic chain, thus generating the illusion of the real formation of an object thought through this representation. Consequently, it becomes clear how important it is for Kant to investigate the role played by the unconditioned in relation to the power of cognition to show how transcendent concepts can be operated on without falling into contradiction by means of a problematic use (*KrV*, A647/B675). This proves the

²¹ On this relationship between the logical maxim and its conversion into a synthetic principle of speculative reason, see Loparic (1987).

importance of the representation of the unconditioned within the Kantian project, since it not only solves the epistemic problems involved in the use of transcendent concepts, but also reveals how the blunders of classical metaphysics were inevitably formed.

Kant was able to develop these theses because he noticed that the problem revolved around the indistinction of the contents with which reason operated in conducting the chain of syllogisms. The development of cognition as operated by speculative reason is not concerned with the source of the represented content. This concatenation of cognitions mediated by concepts must keep unfolding itself in the polysyllogistic chain up to the ultimate principle that contains a representation of the unconditioned. Strictly speaking, it makes no difference from the standpoint of reason whether the reasoning developed is about appearances or not. Reason does not take into account the insufficiency of the understanding in providing content that keeps up with its syllogistic capacity. For reason, its *logical maxim* is already a synthetic principle, since the former takes the conditioned as synthetically linked to the unconditioned (*KrV*, A308/B64). This is why the activity of reason is itself illusory. The errors of traditional metaphysics do not originate in an illusion triggered from the outside but rather in a conflict of reason against itself. However, this does not mean that the way speculative reason produces cognitions is inherently "flawed." On the contrary, it is through this very inclination of reason toward the supersensible that Kant manages to promote an entire philosophical project. In this context, the critical approach presented in the *Dialectic* fulfills two roles: from a speculative point of view, it prevents the activities of reason and those of the understanding from being confused; it also shows that the unconditioned can be represented without reason coming into contradiction with the other powers of cognition.²²

One can then safely say that the erroneous use of the representation of the unconditioned is responsible for several errors in pre-critical philosophy. For Kant, this error consists in interpreting that the *logical maxim* can be used as a principle capable of objectively determining the unconditioned. Thus, from the point of view of this transcendental use of the logical activity of reason, the unconditioned is thought of as real and placed as the ultimate condition of experience. That is, the necessary formal relation between concepts involved in the syllogistic chain is—mistakenly—thought as occurring in the relation between the objects themselves that are represented by these concepts. The logical development of the

²² On this topic, see (Wood, 1975, pp. 595-614). “The story is that human reason, confronted with a series of conditioned items, is unable to rest content with what its sensibly-confined faculties can give it. But although it cannot help inquiring after the ‘unconditioned,’ it is an attempt to extend its knowledge in this way that necessarily leads it into illusions and (apparent) contradictions. The moral of the story is that reason must learn to live with its problematic condition. It must maintain its respect for its aspirations to knowledge of the unconditioned, but it must equally resign itself to the fact that these aspirations can never be satisfied. And it must guard itself against the vain hopes for and false pretensions to a kind of knowledge it can never have except in an illusory form” (Wood, 1975, p. 612).

polysyllogisms is taken as a synthetic unfolding of the determination of experience up to its ultimate completion in the hypostatized representation of the unconditioned. Consequently, the unconditioned—as part of the formal process—is determined as a link in the chain of reasoning that objectively determines appearances.²³

The *Transcendental Dialectic* works as a kind of theory of the unconditioned, in which this representation is presented as a guiding thread to the distinct uses of speculative reason. Unlike what Kant writes in the *Analytic*, where there is only an indirect presentation of the unconditioned (thing in itself) as a limiting concept presupposed in a negative sense, in the *Dialectic* we find a subjective derivation (*KrV*, A336/B393) of the representation of the unconditioned, even if this determination is only illusory and can only be legitimately used hypothetically. Through this subjective derivation of the unconditioned, Kant not only shows that the production of certain transcendent concepts is necessary, but also determines how they originate. Kant named these transcendent concepts ideas. In Kant's words: "By the idea of a necessary concept of reason, I understand one to which no congruent object can be given in the senses. Thus the pure concepts of reason we have just examined are transcendental ideas" (*KrV*, A327/B383).

One of the major results of the *Dialectic* is the conceptualization of transcendental ideas. Kant not only presents the concepts of these ideas, but also proposes to determine their source and quantity. This task may initially seem pretentious. However, if one considers the derivation of the categories in the *Analytic*, Kant has at least one guiding thread to determine the ways in which the unconditioned can be expressed necessarily in these ideas. Just as the logical functions of judgments, when related to the synthetic unity of intuitions, allow the establishment of pure concepts of the understanding (*KrV*, A79/B105), he noticed that the logical forms of the syllogism, based on these same logical functions, reveal the pure concepts of reason (*KrV*, A321/B378). He uses a rule from general logic that determines that the only basis for the division of types of syllogisms must be the function of the relation found in

²³ Kuno Fischer correctly pointed out the logical error involved in this process. The inference grounded in the polysyllogism that derives the existence of the unconditioned from the conditioned given in experience is actually a *quaternio terminorum*. A logical fallacy takes place because the—"conditioned"—middle term is used in two different meanings, namely as appearance and as object in general. Thus, as it is the case for reason, given the conditioned, the unconditioned must follow; if the unconditioned exists, by dialectical inference, the unconditioned should also exist. Kant uses this argument in his solution to the problem of dialectical inferences of reason, although he uses the term *sophisma figurae dictionis* (*KrV*, B411 e A500/B528). The two dialectical errors mean the same thing, namely a different use of the *medius terminus*. What is important here is that this kind of error can only be corrected by transcendental logic. General logic—by not inquiring into the source of a representation—cannot limit the use of the transcendent principle provided by reason. Transcendental logic alone can identify such an error (Fischer, 1866, pp.165-169). According to him: "This syllogism of metaphysic is, then, no syllogism; for the middle term is not one, but two totally different concepts it is what the old logicians called a 'quaternio terminorum'" (Fischer, 1866, p. 167).

the major premise that makes up the syllogism.²⁴ Therefore, one must find a different type of syllogism for each one of the three kinds of the function of relation. Consequently, from the three types of syllogisms, one can obtain three distinct ways in which the unconditioned is represented as a pure concept of reason or transcendental idea. As a result, each polysyllogistic structure that contains the unconditioned represents "[...] all experiential cognition as determined through an absolute totality of conditions" (*KrV*, A327/B384). This totality must be absolute, since the chain only stops at the representation of the unconditioned.

The absolute whole of the series of conditions for a given conditioned is always unconditioned, because outside it there are no more conditions regarding which it could be conditioned. But the absolute whole of such a series is only an idea, or rather a problematic concept, whose possibility has to be investigated, particularly in reference to the way in which the unconditioned may be contained in it as the properly transcendental idea that is at issue (*KrV*, A417-418/B445, footnote).

The conditioned unity, expressed by polysyllogistic chains and necessarily required by reason, is, therefore, represented in three classes derived from the three types of syllogisms based on the three determinations of the logical form of relation: the categorical, the hypothetical, and the disjunctive. Similarly, the unconditioned will be represented in the three categories corresponding to these functions: substantiality, causality, and community.

There will be as many concepts of reason as there are species of relations represented by the understanding by means of the categories; and so we must seek an unconditioned, first, for the categorical synthesis in a subject, second for the hypothetical synthesis of the members of a series, and third for the disjunctive synthesis of the parts in a system (*KrV*, A323/B379).

Based on this exposition of transcendental ideas, Kant clarifies how the unconditioned is objectively determined. Transcendent objects, derived from three species of syllogism, are representations of the unconditioned as synthetic unities of all conditions belonging to a structured chain in each one of the three classes of syllogisms. The unconditioned represented in the polysyllogistic unity of reason is converted—by means of a transcendental illusion—into an object thought in the idea. As long as this representation remains with an unknown meaning and the object thought in the idea serves

²⁴ According to Kant: "Inferences of reason (*die Vernunftschlüsse*) can be divided neither as to quantity, for every major is a rule, hence something universal; nor in regard to quality, for it is equivalent whether the conclusion is affirmative or negative; nor, finally, in respect of modality, for the conclusion is always accompanied with the consciousness of necessity and consequently has the dignity of an apodeictic proposition. Thus only relation remains as the sole possible ground of division of inferences of reason" (*Log*, AA 09:122).

only as a *focus imaginarius*, the representation of the unconditioned will have a legitimate use that is indispensable to the systematic articulation of cognition, operating in harmony with the empirical use of the understanding. However, as already mentioned, if that same representation is taken as a real object, independent of our sensibility, this representation of the unconditioned would be legitimate (*KrV*, A643/B671).²⁵

From what has been shown, Kant was able to explain how the objects of the three *metaphysicae speciales*, according to Christian Wolff's classical division, come about. In short, Kant shows that the objects of *rational theology*, *cosmology*, and *psychology* originate from an illusory representation of the unconditioned. As a result, the three transcendental doctrines just mentioned obtain their object as a result of an illusion prompted by an erroneous representation of the unconditioned given in conducting syllogisms that are dialectical and developed in a prosyllogistic direction so as to go beyond possible experience and objectively determine the unconditioned.

The thinking subject is the object of psychology, the sum total of all appearances (the world) is the object of cosmology, and the thing that contains the supreme condition of the possibility of everything that can be thought (the being of all beings) is the object of theology (*KrV*, A334/B391).²⁶

Despite having strongly criticized this frustrated attempt by traditional metaphysics to take the unconditioned as a concept of ostensive use (*KrV*, A671/B699) capable of constituting an object, Kant still devises a positive use for the illusory character of reason. It is via a heuristic use (*KrV*, A671/B699) of the representation of the unconditioned, obtained through transcendental illusion, that Kant was able to develop regulative principles of the systematic unity of the entire use of the understanding. Only through these principles, derived from the regulative and hypothetical use of the *logical maxim* converted into a *principle of pure reason*—which is in turn articulated with the concept of systematic unity (*KrV*, A647/B675)—, was Kant able to define the function of speculative reason in relation to knowledge about nature. For, as he argues, only reason allows knowledge to be systematic and, therefore, scientific, since "Nobody attempts to establish a science without grounding it on an idea" (*KrV*, A834/B862). The understanding, through its immediate inferences, can only know the world dispersedly. In order for the

²⁵ On the correct use of transcendental ideas, cf. Louzado (2019).

²⁶ The thinking subject—the object of rational psychology—is the result of the objective representation of the unconditioned based on the categorical function; the world—the object of cosmology—is the result of the objective representation of the unconditioned based on the hypothetical function; and God—the object of theology—is the result of the objective representation of the unconditioned based on the disjunctive function.

laws of nature to be systematically applied, the understanding must follow the unity of reason.²⁷ Without a solution for the problem of the representation of the unconditioned, there would be no way for Kant to completely architect the functioning of systematic scientific knowledge of nature within the *KrV*. Furthermore, he would have not made his project of a practical philosophy viable. Thus, given all that has been said here, the representation of the unconditioned is shown to be of extreme relevance to an adequate understanding of Kant's theoretical philosophy.

5. Concluding Remarks

As I hope to have shown, the representation of the unconditioned is a topic of great relevance for understanding Kant's philosophical project. In this paper, I have set out to clarify Kant's theses on the syllogistic activity of speculative reason and how Kant, based on this activity, explains the origin of metaphysical objects previously approached by the philosophical tradition. Kant was able to defend these theses because he introduced, in his hall of logical elements, a kind of principle that was not found in any of his works prior to the *KrV*, namely a *logical maxim* that requires the determination of the unconditioned for every syllogistic series operated by reason. This theoretical device allowed Kant to solve the problem of the harmony between the cognitive powers and uphold a legitimate positive use of the representation of the unconditioned. This confirms Hinske's thesis according to which the analysis of the concept of the unconditioned consists in a major shift in the development of Kant's thought. The greatest result of this revolution within Kant's theory of the unconditioned was that of finding a solution to the apparent contradiction between the concepts of freedom (unconditioned) and nature (conditioned), allowing the unconditioned to be objectively handled within a practical framework. This possible contradiction was after all inexistent, since what happened was only a confusion between different semantic domains, one being unconditioned (idea) and the other conditioned (appearance).

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²⁷ "The understanding constitutes an object for reason, just as sensibility does for the understanding. To make systematic the unity of all possible empirical actions of the understanding is a business of reason, just as the understanding connects the manifold of appearances through concepts and brings it under empirical laws" (*KrV*, A664/B692).

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